

paying a first bonus responsive to the outcome of the secondary game.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of detecting a triggering event comprises:

monitoring an operating parameter of the gaming machines over the network;  
establishing a predetermined criterion for the operating parameter; and  
sending a triggering event signal through the network when the operating parameter meets the predetermined criterion.

3. The method of claim 2 further including:  
selecting one of the machines when the operating parameter meets the predetermined criterion; and  
initiating the secondary game from the selected machine.

4. (Once Amended) The method of claim 3 further including paying the first bonus to the selected machine responsive to the outcome of the secondary game.

5. The method of claim 3 further including:  
providing an actuator at each of the gaming machines for initiating the primary game;  
sending a deactivation signal to the selected gaming machine;  
disabling the actuator of the selected gaming machine, responsive to the deactivation signal, so that the actuator does not initiate the primary game; and  
using the actuator to initiate the secondary game.

6. The method of claim 3 wherein the secondary game comprises a multisegmented wheel, each segment of the wheel having a predetermined bonus amount associated therewith, said method further including:

displaying a multisegmented wheel on a video display device;  
initiating a control signal for the secondary game from the selected gaming machine, said control signal determining a bonus payment displayed on one of the segments of the wheel;  
and  
paying out a bonus to the selected gaming machine responsive to said initiated control signal.

7. The method of claim 3 further including displaying a status message on the selected gaming machine responsive to the secondary game.

8. The method of claim 2 wherein the operating parameter is the total amount of coins played on the group of gaming machines, and the criterion is a predetermined number of coins.

9. The method of claim 2 wherein the operating parameter is the total amount of money played on the gaming machines, and the criterion is a predetermined amount of money.

10. The method of claim 2 further including zeroing the monitored operating parameter after the operating parameter meets the predetermined criterion.

11. The method of claim 2, further including:  
initiating a tertiary game responsive to a second triggering event; and  
paying out a second bonus responsive to an outcome of the tertiary game.

12. The method of claim 11 further including:  
monitoring a second operating parameter of the selected gaming machine over the network;  
establishing a second predetermined criterion; and  
sending a second triggering event signal through the network when the second operating parameter meets the second predetermined criterion.

13. The method of claim 1 further including displaying the secondary game on a plasma-based flat panel video display device in common with the group of gaming machines.

14. (Once Amended) An apparatus for selectively operating a plurality of machines over a network, said apparatus comprising:  
a plurality of gaming machines for playing a primary game thereon;  
an actuator coupled to each of the gaming machines for selective activation of the primary game by a player at a respective gaming machine;  
a secondary game controller;  
a network coupled to the gaming devices and the controller for exchanging data between the secondary game controller and the gaming devices;  
a secondary game coupled to the secondary game controller for displaying the secondary game responsive to signals from the secondary game controller;  
wherein the secondary game controller monitors the activity of the gaming devices over the network and causes the secondary game to initiate when an operating parameter meets a predetermined criterion; the apparatus further including

means for selecting one of the plurality of game machines when the operating parameter meets the criterion; and

means on said selected machine for initiating said secondary game, wherein said secondary game controller applies a first bonus to the selected machine responsive to an outcome of the secondary game.

15. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including:

A1 a plasma display monitor coupled to the secondary game controller for displaying the secondary game responsive to signals from the secondary game controller.

16. The apparatus according to claim 15 further including an animation computer coupled to the plasma display monitor for driving the video display responsive to the secondary game controller.

~~Claim 17 is cancelled.~~

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18. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including a configuration workstation remotely coupled to the secondary game controller over the network for remotely changing the predetermined criterion.

19. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including a wireless data port coupled to the network for transmitting audit data to a remote wireless receiver.

20. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including:

a play counter for counting the total number of coins played across the plurality of gaming machines, wherein the criterion is a predetermined number of coins.

21. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including:

a play counter for counting the total amount of money played across the plurality of gaming machines, wherein the criterion is a predetermined amount of money.

22. A method for operating a gaming machine comprising the steps of:

allowing play to occur on the gaming machine;

detecting a triggering event based on a first criteria;

measuring a rate of play at the gaming machine; and

awarding a bonus after a second occurrence of the triggering event if the measured rate of play at the gaming machine meets a predetermined criteria.

23. The method of claim 22 further comprising:  
allowing play to occur at a plurality of other gaming machines; and  
initiating a secondary game from a selected one of the gaming machines responsive to the triggering event.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising:  
placing the selected gaming machine in a queue to play the secondary game responsive to the triggering event, wherein the second game can be initiated from the selected gaming machine only if the selected machine is at the front of the queue; and  
awarding a secondary game bonus to the selected machine responsive to an outcome of the secondary game.

A2 25. The method of claim 23 further comprising:  
initiating a tertiary game responsive to the secondary occurrence of the triggering event;  
and  
awarding the bonus to the selected gaming machine based on an outcome of the tertiary game.

26. A method for operating a gaming device configured to play a primary game comprising the steps of:  
providing a plurality of gaming machines having a primary game associated therewith;  
coupling the gaming machines to a common video display device;  
displaying a bonus amount on the video display device;  
permitting players to play the primary game at the gaming machines;  
monitoring at least one variable related to user-controlled play on the gaming machines;  
establishing a predetermined criterion for one of said variables;  
selecting one of the machines when said one variable meets the criterion; and  
awarding the bonus amount to said selected machine.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein the criterion includes the total coins played, the method further including the steps of:  
monitoring the number of coins played from each of the machines;  
incrementing a common counter by the number of coins played from each of the machines; and  
selecting the machine at which the coins were played that caused the common counter to match the criterion established.

28. The method of claim 26 wherein the common display device is a plasma-based flat panel display.

29. The method of claim 26 further including the step of displaying a status message on the selected gaming machine responsive to the bonus.

A2 30. (Once Amended) The apparatus according to claim 14 further including a video display device coupled to the secondary game controller for displaying the secondary game responsive to signals from the secondary game controller.

31. The apparatus according to claim 14 further including a liquid crystal display (LCD) device coupled to the secondary game controller for displaying the secondary game responsive to signals from the secondary game controller.

32. The method of claim 1 in which the triggering event is an occurrence of a predetermined reel combination on one of the group of gaming machines.

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